

[Updated Guidelines Include Mercury, PCBs, Perchlorate](#)

Kansas Issues New Fish Consumption Advisories

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) have issued new fish consumption advisories for 2005. Fish consumption advisories do not mean Kansas fish are unsafe to eat, but are simply guidelines for the public to consider in making informed choices about their health and diet. The advisories identify species of fish that should be eaten in limited quantities, or in some cases, avoided altogether because of contamination found in tested fish.

The new advisories include guidelines for mercury, PCBs, and perchlorate in addition to chlordane; previous advisories had only included chlordane. In addition, the new advisories also now include guidelines for lead and cadmium in shellfish.

Trend data from most Kansas long-term monitoring sites show a decrease in the major contaminants involved in this advisory: mercury, PCBs, and chlordane.

PCBs have not been in use in the U.S. since the 1970s and chlordane use was discontinued in 1988. Chlordane levels have declined dramatically statewide and PCB levels are expected to follow. PCBs and chlordane degrade slowly, so it takes decades for them to be completely removed from the environment, even after use is discontinued.

The advisories assess cancer risk levels using EPA methods. Cancer risk assessment is a method to determine the added increase in cancer levels in a population if fish in the advisory areas are consumed regularly over a 70-year period. Assessments that estimate the increased risk of cancer as greater than one in 100,000 are determined to be unacceptably high-risk levels. Risk assessments for non-carcinogens (mercury, lead, and cadmium) were based on 8-ounce meal size for adults and 4-ounce meal size for children over 9 years of age. Ten water-body specific advisories for several contaminants were issued, along with the following state-wide advisory regarding mercury in fish:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued a national fish consumption advisory for mercury, which recommends consuming no more than one, 8-ounce meal per week of non-commercial (locally caught) fish. EPA bases this on nationwide average mercury levels in various species of fish, and recommends first consideration be given to local advisories. KDHE and KDWP do not apply the EPA advisory to bottom-feeding, bottom dwelling fish based on state data. KDHE and KDWP do recommend the national mercury advisory for sight-feeding predatory fish, such as large-mouth bass.

Additional testing for mercury is underway on sight-feeding predatory fish in Kansas and additional data will be available in late 2005. Chlordane fish consumption advisories issued in 1993 were rescinded on six stream segments. The following streams or stream segments no longer have any form of advisory: Lower Kansas River (Wyandotte and Johnson Counties), Cow Creek (Crawford and Cherokee Counties), Arkansas River in Wichita upstream of the Lincoln St. Dam (Sedgwick County), Cowskin Creek (Sedgwick and Sumner Counties), Kill Creek (Johnson County), Cottonwood River (Lyon County).



While bottom-feeders, such as this monster catfish, avoid the advisory list, KDHE experts recommend only eating one eight-ounce meal weekly of non-commercial fish.